

Lori [Lori Santos, United Press International].

not available for verification of the content of this news conference.

### **Cancellation of Joypura Visit**

**Q.** Sir, can you tell us what security concerns prompted you to cancel your trip to the village today? And are you confident it will not happen again on this trip, particularly in Pakistan?

**President Clinton.** The answer to the first part of your question is, no I won't, because I don't think I can. I should. But let me—that I thought it was very, very important for me to come here. And I think it's important for the United States to see its friends and to work for a future. I regret that I could not go to the village. And I'm delighted that the villagers are coming to see me because it will give me a chance to highlight something the American press has heard me talk about many times, which is that the whole microcredit movement in the world basically began here in Bangladesh with the Grameen Bank nearly 20 years ago—maybe more than that now. And the Prime Minister and I talked about this.

I am honored that I will have a chance to see Muhammad Yunus again, to see some of the villagers, and to try to highlight the important role that, I believe, microcredit should have not only here in Bangladesh but throughout all developing countries in the world. The United States, through AID, supports about 2 million microcredit loans a year in other places. So I'm delighted I'm going to be able to see the people from the village and to support this very, very important initiative in which Bangladesh is truly the world's leader.

**Q.** Sir, and about the security on the rest of the trip?

**Prime Minister Hasina.** I think we can—we can stop here. Four questions already have been asked. And thank you very much. Thank you very much. And, President, thank you very much.

**President Clinton.** Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 187th news conference began at 1:40 p.m. on the front steps outside the Prime Minister's Office. In his remarks, the President referred to Muhammad Yunus, founder and managing director, Grameen Bank. A tape was

### **Remarks to Visitors From Joypura in Dhaka**

*March 20, 2000*

Thank you very much. First let me say to the Prime Minister how delighted I am to be here in Bangladesh, and how much I have enjoyed meeting today with all the people from Joypura. I thank you, Asia, for your teaching. I thank Hasan Abed and the other people who are involved in the BRAC movement. I thank my longtime friend Muhammad Yunus for bringing his people here today who are associated with the Grameen Bank. And I'd also like to thank the people who came with the Asrayon project that the Prime Minister has founded. Thank you all for making me feel welcome today.

Bangladesh is a country that, by traditional economic measurement, is still poor. But as I saw today, in terms of the spirit and the ability of the people, it is full of riches. And the challenge we all face is how to unlock the ability—the brains, the heart, the spirit of the people of Bangladesh—beginning with the wonderful children that I have seen, but also including the people that I met with the Asrayon project and the people who have participated in the Grameen Bank.

I want my fellow Americans and people throughout the world to know that the people of Bangladesh are a good investment in the future. If you look only at the Grameen Bank, it has 2.4 million borrowers in 39,000 villages. Ninety-four percent of the borrowers are women; 98 percent of the loans are repaid. And now, with loans for people to buy cell phones, entire villages are being brought into the information age. I want people throughout the world to know this story.

I want to thank the Prime Minister and the people involved in the Asrayon movement for setting a goal that no person in this country should be homeless. That should be every nation's goal. And I want to thank the teachers and the supporters of the BRAC School for showing us that all our children can learn, and they all deserve the chance to learn.

I also want to thank your Government and industry for working with the International Labor Organization and the United States to take some 9,000 children out of garment factories and put them in classrooms. There are children here today, including a group from a special ILO-supported school that our United States Senator, Tom Harkin, told me about, that he visited 2 years ago. I thank you for doing that, as well.

I want to continue to support all these projects. I am pleased to announce today that the United States will commit several million dollars to help another 30,000 Bangladeshi children move from work in hazardous industries into schools that will give them safer, better futures.

We will work with the ILO and Grameen to help 3 million women in rural areas gain access to micro-health insurance. And we will commit several million dollars to help women get new skills, improve working conditions, and secure fair representation in trade organizations.

We will also provide several million dollars to support another Grameen program, a solar cell program to use the clean energy of the Sun to generate power in villages throughout Bangladesh, cheap power, clean power, power that will empower all kinds of people to raise their incomes in different ways in the next few years.

I would like to make just two points in closing. First of all, I want to bring greetings from my wife who preceded me to Bangladesh. She and our daughter came here a few years ago. And she told me of all the good things that were going on here, and she urged me to have the United States do more to support the Grameen Bank, to support your Government, to support efforts to unleash the ability of your children and your families to build a better future.

And finally, I would like to thank all of you who shared your stories with me today. Many of you have overcome great obstacles in your lives. Many of you still face great challenges. But you convinced me again that no one—no one—should believe that poverty is destiny, that people have to remain poor, that their children cannot learn and do better. You have made me believe more strongly than ever that every child in this world should

be given the chance to dream and to live those dreams.

Because I have been privileged to be President of the United States, I have traveled all over the world. I have met with the wealthiest and most powerful people in the world. I have been in the most successful communities in the world. I have also been in the poorest villages of Africa, of Asia, of Latin America. And I believe, more strongly today than ever, that intelligence and ability and a human spirit are evenly distributed across the rich and the poor, in every continent on Earth.

And everyone must have a chance. Every little boy and every little girl must have a chance. I will do what I can to be a good partner and a good friend in that endeavor in Bangladesh.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. at the U.S. Embassy. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh; Fazle Hasan Abed, executive director, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC); and Muhammad Yunus, founder and managing director, Grameen Bank. The President's visit to Joypura was cancelled, and the people of Joypura visited the President at the Embassy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## **Statement on the Observance of Nowruz**

*March 20, 2000*

This week people of Iranian heritage around the world will celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Nowruz is a tradition as old as the land of Persia, but at the same time it celebrates change and renewal: the changing season from winter to spring, a new year and a new beginning. It is a time to gather with family and friends and to look toward the future. I extend my best wishes for the new year to Americans of Iranian origin and to the people of Iran. I hope this season will bring the start of a new era of better relations between our two countries.

*Nowruz Mubarak.*